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ABSTRACT

A study identified the academic needs of Australian vocational educators who are developing their own and others' communication competence in response to the imperative for vocational educators to provide a wide range of programs in communication for the workplace. Subjects, over 100 vocational educators enrolled in the University of Technology, Sydney, in the School of Adult Vocational Education, spoke to individual lecturers and evaluated formatively and summatively a new major sequence of four subjects in Communication Development Studies. Results indicated the vocational educators' needs clustered around a strong interest relating to conflict management, negotiation, listening, assertiveness, team building, group dynamics, leadership, interviewing and conducting meetings as a communication process. The academic program has tried to model educational principles in adult education to acknowledge teachers' diversity and to provide opportunities for educators to focus their intellectual efforts on producing benefits for their practice of teaching. An experiential approach to the teaching of communication principles and practices, along with opportunities for discussion of key issues, would be appropriate. Assessment by negotiating an individual learning contract with an academic advisor provides a means for communication specialists to demonstrate development of their own and/or others' understanding and practice of an aspect of communication. The new major sequence of study in communication emphasizes combining theoretical approaches in communication with strategies for teaching, and indeed facilitating, communication in many vocational contexts. (A description of the course comprising the major sequence of study is attached. Contains 60 references.) (RS)

Development of Teachers in Vocational Colleges

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Abstract

This paper will focus on identifying the academic needs of Australian vocational educators who are developing their own and others' communication competence. Currently in Australian society, the impact of award restructuring, competency based performance standards, the quality assurance movement and team based work practices, over the last five years, has generated significant imperatives for vocational educators to provide a wide range of programs in communication for the workplace. Responding to these and other related forces, Technical and Further Education has developed an innovative set of National Communication Modules. Teachers are now implementing these Modules across Australia, on campus, in award courses providing vocational education for specific industries, and on site, on a consultancy basis.

At the University of Technology, Sydney, in the School of Adult Vocational Education, a new major sequence of study of four subjects in Communication Development Studies was introduced in 1993 in the Bachelor of Education (Technical). Throughout this major sequence of study, practising teachers and trainers aim to increase their own understanding of human communication and, most importantly, they seek to extend their ability to apply theoretical rationales and strategies to develop the communication competence of others - vocationally oriented students and workplace practitioners.

In this paper a report is given of research undertaken in 1993 and 1994 with over one hundred vocational educators who have enrolled in this program. Educators completed a questionnaire on entry to each subject, spoke to individual lecturers and evaluated the subjects formatively and summatively. The results of this research are compared to a range of educational initiatives and interventions designed for the new sequence of study specifically to assist vocational educators to meet the academic and professional needs they identified and to encourage them to contribute further to the dynamic field of applied communication in vocational contexts.

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In this paper I would like to explain the recent research, course development and subject implementation in the School of Adult Vocational Education at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) which has been undertaken both to develop educators' awareness of the theory and application of communication studies in their practice and to develop specialist teachers of communication. Our research and course development has been carried out over the past three years. In 1992 we designed a new major sequence of study in Communication Development Studies to be offered from 1993 within the existing Bachelor of Education (Technical). These subjects were developed in close collaboration with representatives of the largest provider of vocational education in New South Wales - NSW TAFE, a major employer of communication teachers.

It is significant to note that these subjects have been developed for experienced, qualified educators, as distinct from pre-service or in-service beginning teachers who attend the Faculty of Education to gain their initial qualifications in teaching. At UTS, beginning nongraduate vocational teachers complete a Bachelor of Teaching in order to gain initial teacher qualifications. In this program we have designed core communication subjects and electives which complement subjects dealing with the principles and practice of teaching. To a large extent, in our communication subjects for beginning teachers, the focus is on analysis and application of key communication skills of immediate relevance to the classroom and for communication with colleagues in typically bureaucratic educational environments. For these contexts we work with beginning teachers to support their understanding and application of language and interpersonal skills such as person perception, nonverbal communication, listening, assertiveness, conflict management and intercultural communication. From these learning experiences there are immediate benefits to new teachers for developing and enhancing their practice of teaching and for applying their understanding of varieties of learning styles and processes of learning to their own classrooms.

The research and course development I would like to examine in this paper concerns providing communication education to qualified teachers who have returned to UTS to pursue a degree program in education (as distinct from teaching). In our sequence of study in communication we have a double agenda. First, we aim to develop educators' *own* current communication skills and analysis of supporting theoretical bases in applied communication and secondly, we aim to provide opportunities for educators to increase their ability to facilitate the development of *others'* (their students') communication skills and applications. Educational approaches to attempt to address these needs have been developed in consultation with the teachers themselves. Research has been conducted with over one hundred teachers in 1993 and 1994 to determine their academic needs and preferences for learning strategies and assessment as they were embarking upon the new major sequence of study in communication. What were their main concerns as they sought to become communication specialists in vocational teaching and how can vocational educators be supported to achieve their professional, and personal, goals?

What are the implications of this research for the theme of our session today "benefits to the practice of teaching and the processing of learning"?

The major sequence of four subjects commenced in First Semester 1993. The four subjects are:

T1143	Developing Interpersonal Relationships
T1141	Developing Group Processes
T1149	Developing Vocational Systems
T1153	Independent Study Project in Vocational Education.

(Please see the Appendix for brief subject descriptions. Normally these subjects are completed over two years, one subject each semester.)

In the first subject the focus is on the personalised elements of the educational process, including developing self awareness, and the role of communication at the interpersonal level, particularly one on one communication. Intragroup and intergroup relationships in educational and workplace settings are discussed in the second subject, while in the third subject we investigate communication issues relating to organisational contexts. The fourth subject provides an opportunity for educators to design and negotiate their own project, for example to explore theoretical and applied aspects relating to a specific National Communication Module.

In February, March and July, 1993 approximately one hundred adult vocational educators were invited to participate in a survey on their communication education needs and 72 responses were collected. In 1994 lecturers collected data from approximately 80 students on their academic interests in the subject "Developing Vocational Systems" and from 20 students in the subject "Independent Study in Vocational Education (Communication)".

1993 Study

Profile of the Participants: Male: 27 **Female:** 45 **Total** : 72

Employment: TAFE : 63 Other (including Armed Services) 9

Location: Metropolitan : 36 **Regional:** 26

Participants' Teaching Areas: ABE; Administration Services (16); Auto Electrical; Automotive Engineering; Business Services; BWS; CEW; Computing and Information Systems; Electrical Trades; Engineering Services/Electronics; English/Communication; Fashion Apparel Manufacturing (7); Graphic Design; Food and Beverages/Hospitality and Tourism (4); ; Hairdressing; Interior design; Jewellery; LMP; Maritime and Aviation; Mechanical Engineering; Metal fabrication; Nursing; Office Studies; Painting and Decorating; Personal and Communication services; Rigging/Scaffolding; Rural Studies; Transport/Plant Mechanics.

Participants' Teaching Experience:

Number of Years - 2; 3 (9); 4 (9); 5 (7); 6 (4); 7; 8 (7); 9; 10 (2); 12 (2); 13 (5); 14 (2); 15 (4); 16 (4); 17 (2); 18; 20 (4); 21 (2); 22 (2); 23; 24; 25. Average: 9.8 years

In their survey responses teachers referred to their interest in enhancing their own teaching and communication skills. They were keen to develop strategies for working with students who come from a language background other than English, students with less education or experiences of learning, students with physical disabilities, disadvantaged students such as 'youth', prisoners and, in particular, women disadvantaged by English language skills, unemployment, low self esteem and the role of single parent.

It was noted that restructuring in trade areas is producing broad based curricula for industry training in which communication subjects will be taught and that existing subjects such as "Office Practice" already contained a significant amount of communication content. One teacher was specifically interested in relating communication to the practice of a specialist industry area such as engineering.

Respondents from the armed services commented that communication was "becoming a major issue in organisations and the human resource role". Other teachers mentioned making a career change into this area of teaching from a teaching area where severe cut backs were being experienced. One technical trainer explained that in his view the "range of subjects being taught is increasing. These include basic reading, writing and studying techniques for new trainees. The organisation is also requesting trainers to run interview and staff appraisal courses."

One health educator remarked, "I am interested in communication teaching because in my work I have to teach students how to deal with clients, how to communicate at workplaces and how to deal with conflicts". Another teacher of graphic design commented on the relevance of the study of communication, "I feel that my students need to communicate not only ideas in a visual sense but also in an oral way. Clients expect designers to "sell" ideas on all levels. They must also work as a team, exchanging ideas and strategies. Finally, I need to be able to communicate clearly with my students in writing and verbally."

From these comments, it can be seen that the *scope* of vocational education in areas related to strategic human communication has greatly increased in recent years. Consultations with employers and industry representatives consistently mention a variety of communication competencies as desirable, if not mandatory, characteristics of their professionals and paraprofessionals (National Training Board, 1993). Communication offerings themselves, as bodies of knowledge (drawing on interdisciplinary research) and clusters of skills have changed and expanded significantly in recent years as vocational educators and their institutions have developed agendas and frameworks to consult closely with industry and other clients. From language specialist, to interpersonal mediator, to team leader and group process facilitator, to

composer of workplace documentation, to effective organisational manager, the role of the communication teacher/trainer is emerging to accommodate all and more of these areas of knowledge and skill. Moreover, communication teachers may be expected to contextualise and to assess a wide range of specific content for diverse industry clients. Recently, communication teachers are also being expected to develop explicitly students' abilities to solve problems and to think critically.

Teachers/trainers have specifically identified these and other perceived challenges and, consequently, formal education for this emerging role must take these and future changes into account. For example, by encouraging the development of self directed, autonomous communication specialists who are familiar with contemporary theory, a wide variety of resources and a range of strategies for problem solving and who can build upon existing resources, we can assist educators to cope with communication issues which accompany changes in technology, work practices and life style.

Educators have expressed special interest in exploring and understanding total quality management in relation to communication; developing skills for working effectively in teams, especially at times of radical change; assisting themselves and others to become empowered; increasing their abilities to listen empathically and to represent themselves assertively; managing conflicts and negotiating successfully on behalf of themselves and others especially in times of restricted resources and restructuring; increasing their understanding of the use of effective and powerful language and nonverbal means of communication; becoming effective leaders; and investigating whether there are any gender differences in the various means of communication. For those involved in vocational education, particularly in the TAFE sector, similar themes feature prominently in the Australia wide agenda of the National Communication Modules and require skilled teaching practice to achieve appropriate levels of processing of learning by students. In corporate training, in staff development programs in the public sector and in vocational training in industry, these and related themes are fundamental to educational programs which aim to produce communication specialists for vocational applications.

Obviously communication specialists need to integrate appropriate knowledge in communication and education to carry out the functions, responsibilities and expectations of their roles. In the survey of adult vocational educators conducted in 1993, we attempted to elicit vocational educators' own concerns and perceptions of the formal education they required to inform their own practice as teachers and to facilitate processes of learning for their students.

Perceived Challenges and Goals of Vocational Educators interested in Teaching Communication

From the responses to the questionnaire, teachers' perceived challenges and goals may be grouped into the following **four** areas:

1. Extension of teaching practice: understanding communication to be able to teach applied communication for the workplace.
Teachers wanted to develop a greater knowledge of communication skills and relevant applications to the workplace and extend their practice as educators to the teaching of applied communication.

Sample responses:

"To enhance the communication skills in the industry workplace."

"To attain competent, practical communication skills that can be used directly in the workplace."

"To develop and apply strategies to assist and enhance: (a) communication in the classroom; (b) communication in the workplace."

"Broaden knowledge and understanding of the communication process; to acquire additional skills and background experience to become a confident and competent communication teacher."

"I have no formal training in group processes and team building and would like to get a theoretical framework on which to base my teaching."

"In general to identify and articulate (have a better understanding of the different topics)."

"Gain a greater understanding of the dynamics of communication and become a better communicator."

"To be confident to teach the subject myself and even to look at working with industry in my area."

"To acquaint myself with the theory of communication to assist me to feel 'comfortable' as a teacher."

"My goals are to focus on teaching Communication in the Hospitality/Travel Industry; enhance my knowledge of communication in subject areas that I am presently teaching."

"To improve/increase awareness of interpersonal communication both at the personal and professional levels; to be aware of reference texts available to suit my particular needs."

2. Facilitating others' learning: developing others' communication skills

Sample responses:

"To communicate my learned skills/strategies to others to increase their skills."

"Teaching communication skills to students who perceive that skills are not really necessary."

"Good class management depends on the teacher's ability to motivate and communicate. I wish to improve in both of these areas. Knowing how to communicate effectively helps to empower others (students - colleagues) to handle difficult situations. Finally, I wish to improve *my* self confidence."

3. Processing of own learning: developing own communication skills (personally and professionally)

Sample responses:

"To improve my ability to communicate on a personal and professional level."

"To become a better communicator, more confident and more assertive. Communicating with others with confidence."

"To discover how to communicate better within a group situation and one to one. Perhaps I will be able to communicate better with my family as well (I think I should have completed this subject years ago)."

"To be a much better communicator socially as well as professionally, such as listening skills, assertiveness skills; to develop self esteem."

"To get insight into myself as a communicator; understand the communication process through theory; to identify barriers to communication; to become more aware as a communicator of the communication process."

"I'm sure the subject will be educational in the wider sense - in my current position and private relationships."

4. Credentialism: gaining formal qualifications

Sample responses:

" I am upgrading my qualifications. Personally I am interested in all aspects of communication."

"To improve my communication skills in all areas. Another career avenue to explore next year."

"To obtain my qualifications in communication and to be a better communicator and teacher."

"To be a confident teacher of communication."

"To "formalise" communication qualifications; increase my expertise; network with other communication teachers; pick up new strategies for the classroom."

Academic Needs of Vocational Teachers of Communication

In 1993 and 1994, participants were asked to identify their academic needs in the following subjects: "Developing Interpersonal Relationships"; "Developing Group Processes"; "Developing Vocational Systems"; "Independent Study Project in Vocational Education (Communication)". The findings are presented below grouped under each subject heading, with the academic needs mentioned most often listed in order of frequency and marked *.

Developing Interpersonal Relationships
Samples of academic needs in 1993 and 1994
*Conflict
*Listening
*Negotiating Skills
*Assertiveness
*Nonverbal communication; body language
*Oral presentations; public speaking; anxiety in public speaking
*Written communication
*Perception
*Questioning - good/bad questioning
*Transactional Analysis
*Communication barriers
*Disclosure
*Individual construction of meaning
*Presenting Reports
*Relating to other cultures/nationalities (speakers of languages other than English)
*Self esteem and communication
*The effects of values, attitudes and self esteem on communication
Attribution and relational communication
Counselling Skills
Cybernetics
Developing confidence
Effective group control
Feedback strategies
Formal communication

Gaining meaning quickly from the written word
Group dynamics
How to establish rapport/understanding (mainly of students) reasonably quickly
How to establish an open exchange of ideas and feelings without losing control of situation (e.g. class)
How to defuse difficult situations with students and colleagues
How to start and continue a conversation
How to write a professional resume for a position in TAFE
Interesting teaching strategies
Interviewing
Intrapersonal communication
Manipulation
Meetings
Nondiscriminatory writing and speaking
Persuasion
Persuasive techniques (overcoming barriers to learning communication skills)
Presenting information
Reflective behaviour
Researching
Roles people play in life
Self concept
Self development
Speaking skills - public and other
Strategies for improving oral and written presentations
Teaching communication skills to those students that reject the need to formally acquire communication skills
Teaching principles of self awareness
The rationalization for teaching communication skills
Theory of communication
Why professionals need to play 'power games" in meetings instead of finding the best solution.

* Indicates the most frequently mentioned academic needs arranged in order of frequency of responses

Developing Group Processes
Samples of academic needs in 1993 and 1994
*Team building and group learning
*Leadership
*Group dynamics
*Group methods
*Group skills development
*Evaluating groups
*Power and group process
Assessment of group norms/needs
Building group and team strengths
Establishing groups

Generating group development to enhance learning
Group behaviour
Group manipulation - personality of groups
Leading a discussion within a group
Learning and change
Maintaining groups
Managing change in groups
Motivating a group
Physical positioning of self in a group
Ranking of self in a group i.e. leader, follower etc.
Role plays
Synergy
Teamwork
What motivates groups to randomly associate in temporary situations
Work team communication

* Indicates the most frequently mentioned academic needs arranged in order of frequency of responses

Developing Vocational Systems
Samples of academic needs in 1994

*The interview process; performance appraisals; interview strategies - recruitment, appraisal and counselling; interviewing skills; interviews as a selection process; assisting applicants; recruitment and induction policies and communication practices
*Negotiation: negotiation skills for particular clients in the workplace
*Conducting meetings: communication process of meetings
*Communication audits: process and application
Counselling skills in the workplace
The culture of a vocational system; organisational communication and culture
Student/teacher culture: possible ways to increase motivation in this area
Conflict management within a vocational system
Power, conflict and politics within vocational systems; sources of power within vocational systems
Communication characteristics of a vocational system
Managing/facilitating change; change agents and communication strategies
Coping with change in a manufacturing enterprise
Communication strategies for change within a vocational system
Work team communication
Structures and networks of organisational communication; informal networks of communication in vocational systems

Independent Study Project in Vocational Education (Communication)
Samples of academic needs in 1994
*Leadership; leadership in workplace and vocational settings
*Teambuilding
*Interviewing
*Negotiation
Nonverbal communication
Communication audits
Communication breakdown in the vocational system and communication audits
Characteristics of communication in vocational systems
Client interaction in a multicultural environment
The concept of self
Job seeking skills: guidelines
Analysis of the development of the quality movement within the changing climate of the vehicle repair business: implications for communication practices

* Indicates the most frequently mentioned academic needs arranged in order of frequency of responses

TAFE National Communication Modules
In 1993, participants indicated their interest in studying the following areas of communication related to the National Communication Modules:

The titles of these Modules are arranged in order of frequency of response (* indicates high frequency of response):

*Negotiation Skills

*Dealing with Conflict

Job Seeking Skills

Presenting Reports

Workplace Communication

Writing Workplace Documents

Client Interaction

Graphic Communication

Interviews

Speaking in Public

Team Building

Writing in Plain English

Presenting Information

Writing Skills for Work

Work Team Communication

Meetings

Technical Writing

Educational Principles Relevant for the Academic Needs of Communication Specialists

We can see from the responses of vocational educators concerning their academic needs across the field of communication studies that there are clusters of strong interest relating to conflict management, negotiation, listening, assertiveness, team building, group dynamics, leadership, interviewing and conducting meetings as a communication process. To a lesser extent, there is interest in areas such as communication audits, nonverbal communication, oral presentations/public speaking, written communication, presenting reports and job seeking skills. It was clear from the questionnaire responses that vocational educators bring a wide range of experience as teachers and as adults with considerable life experience to the academic program. While these identified clusters of high priority academic needs are useful indicators for likely emphasis in class sessions, they are by no means shared across the whole of the class members. Indeed many class members are able to contribute critical analyses of the theory and practice of selected areas because of the depth of their previous experience. It is imperative for the educational program to take this variety of experience into account and to adopt educational principles which deal with diversity of academic needs in all facets of course implementation: class sessions; resources; assessment; feedback; and individual consultation of academic staff with class members. Issues of opportunities for choice of effort and means for independent study, within supportive frameworks, emerged as being highly significant factors in meeting these academic needs.

The academic program has tried to model educational principles in adult education in order to acknowledge teachers' diversity and to provide opportunities for educators to focus their intellectual efforts on producing benefits for their practice of teaching. In addition teachers can formulate learning strategies to suit, as well as to challenge, their own processes of learning. Specifically, the learning experiences provided by the major sequence of study aim to:

- foster the skills of self-directed learners in an adult education context;

- value and utilise the range of experiences that teachers bring to the subject;
- achieve an integration between communication competencies and the realities of the workplace;
- establish a reciprocal relationship between theory and practice;
- develop critical awareness in adult educators of their own theories, practices and approaches;
- recognise the importance of action research as a basis for developing effective teaching strategies in the area of communication.

These educational principles inform both the content of the academic subject and the adult learning process. The principles lead us to a recommended learning process which includes the following characteristics:

- negotiation of individual learning needs with the broad framework of the subject content;
- acceptance of prior learning;
- learning experiences designed to cater for teachers' developmental and work related needs;
- the use of a variety of means to reflect on experience;
- assessment by learning contract negotiated to suit individual learning needs.

Philosophy of Academic Subjects for Communication Specialists

As we have previously emphasised, the design and development of appropriate academic subjects for communication specialists should be guided by adult learning principles. We are aware that learning occurs both from explanations of specific content and familiarity with resources which may be discussed in class sessions and also from the processes by which we seek to convey this learning material and the ways in which we are all actively involved in the learning process.

An experiential approach to the teaching of communication principles and practices is suggested along with opportunities for discussion of key issues. "Communication experiences" may be designed for class sessions and structures may be provided to enable participants to reflect on what happened, how they felt and what they learnt about communication, in class, at work and in life. Teachers are encouraged discuss their approaches for contextualising communication strategies and for relating applied communication to the needs of their clients. There is a great deal of expertise in the group and all members aim to learn from each other.

Most importantly, it is our belief as communication educators that the principles and strategies of human communication are best learnt and absorbed if we focus on our own real life communication experiences or specially structured experiential exercises which we can provide for each other. From these we can draw our own conclusions about the significance of the principles and strategies for our roles as educators and consultants within the many contexts of modern Australian vocational education.

In particular, academic subjects for communication specialists should benefit the practice of teaching and processing of learning by including challenges which:

- are relevant to teachers'/trainers' practical teaching and work needs and experience;
- include an appropriate variety of learning experiences;
- involve teachers/trainers actively in the learning process;
- have a set of learning experiences which are linked to each other in a logical and developmental way;
- discuss not just the use of the tools of effective communication but the higher order thinking skills and the attitudes that will help our students and ourselves to work out when (and when not) to use these communication techniques and strategies;
- make sure that we do not just get generate familiar and comfortable knowledge from our experience but that we discuss new knowledge and theory which helps us to make sense of and build upon that experience.

Learning Contracts

Assessment by negotiating an individual Learning Contract with an academic adviser provides a means for communication specialists to demonstrate development of their own and/or others' understanding and practice of an aspect of communication. The Learning Contract encourages autonomy and self directed learning and many educators have chosen to use the Learning Contract to develop their understanding of and resources for key modules in the National Communication Skills Project. The model of the Learning Contract can also be used by communication educators to empower their own students to develop self assessment of communication skills, concepts and competencies. Not all vocational educators are familiar with the principles and formats of learning contracts and guidance is given, on an individual basis, as required.

By promoting self awareness and reflection on practice in class sessions and assessment, not to mention cooperation and networking, we can assist each other to extend our range of strategic options and to develop the inner resources and support which modern work and life requires. For example, one of the theoretical frameworks which teachers/trainers have found valuable is Hanson's (1981) heuristic concerning assuming responsibility for personal change. The four steps are: awareness; acceptance; sharing and completion. Increasing our awareness by awakening to experience and being attuned to what is going on with ourselves as well as with others, helps us to conduct our interactions with more intention and more empathy, and, according to the communication principle of reciprocity, with more probability that our intentions will be shared by others and that a cycle of attempts to achieve mutual understanding will result. Hanson remarked that increased "awareness frequently results in assuming responsibility for creating one's own experience and enhances the ability to choose what that experience is going to be like " (Hanson, 1981, cited in Saunders and Gottsche, 1993, p. 313). It is essential that communication specialists develop personal and social awareness and that all facilitators of change, especially educationalists, work on their own issues before they intervene via learning experiences to influence others.

The communication specialist who is able to foster a learning environment where previously hidden information, feelings, beliefs and attitudes are explored, where learning experiences and behaviours can be accepted without premature evaluation and judgement and where constraining effects of expectations and preconceived ideas are lessened, will model more holistic interpersonal communication and encourage others to share their perspectives. The skills and processes involved in assisting others to complete a learning experience, to be willing to move on, to clarify their intentions and goals and to determine how they will express these are vitally important for vocational educators. In particular, these are significant responsibilities for communication specialists. As Hanson remarked: "A completed experience leaves no unfinished business: it provides the space to change or to create a new experience" (Hanson, 1981, cited in Saunders and Gottsche, 1993, p. 316). Communication educators are in the position to facilitate personal change according to their abilities to create learning experiences to assist others to increase awareness, acceptance, sharing and completion.

In conclusion, let us take one example of how educators might develop their practice of teaching and facilitate processes of learning for their students and for themselves. One theme which has been identified by industry, and which is reflected throughout contemporary curricula in vocational education, is dealing with conflict. It would be inappropriate to treat this theme as a distinct body of knowledge/set of skills which could be investigated basically in its entirety at a particular stage in one particular communication subject. It is important to make opportunities to integrate and link aspects of the theory of conflict and its management and resolution (for example, the work of Burton (1990), Tillett (1990) and Cornelius and Faire (1989)) to a wide variety of situational variables. We might consider

factors present within the self, in interactions with one other person, in small and large groups and contexts such as organisations and other human systems. Beginning with a constructivist perspective on individual creation and sharing of meaning, explorations of empathy and Bolton's (1987) work on collaborative problem solving, discussed for instance in a subject on interpersonal communication, we can increase our insight into some of the systematic ways of preventing, interpreting and responding to conflict. We can then extend these frameworks in another subject on communication in groups and teams by investigating conflicts within groups arising, perhaps from perceptions of disruption, drawing on theories of facilitation (Bundey et al, (1985), Heron (1989)). Later, in a further subject focusing on organisational communication participants may examine the politics of power and conflict in organisations in the context of resistance to change and styles of leadership (Hanson (1981), Bennis (1989), Hackman and Johnson (1991)). Specialising in a specific communication topic in an independent study project may result in a teacher developing structured learning for a particular industry context, for example for the National Communication Module on *Dealing with Conflict* . Through these kinds of opportunities for integration and application, communication specialists continue to explore both theoretical and applied dimensions of teaching practice and learning.

The new major sequence of study in communication emphasises combining current theoretical approaches in communication with strategies for teaching, and indeed facilitating, communication in many vocational contexts. This foundation can be used as a basis for (a) extending our knowledge about communication in cultural contexts and (b) developing innovative educational methods and means for facilitating our own and others' learning about communication. Communication educators have been keen to formulate their Learning Contracts to provide opportunities for designing and developing new learning materials for specific learners and industry contexts. They have consulted, for example, Australian, American and European researchers and writers and have developed their own original ideas and constructed innovative experiential activities to demonstrate key learning points. In these original resources we can see many demonstrations of benefits to the practice of teaching and the processes of learning contributed by committed and enthusiastic communication educators.

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Appendix

University of Technology, Sydney
School of Adult Vocational Education
Bachelor of Education (Technical)
Major Sequence in Communication Development Studies
Subject Descriptions

T1143 Developing Interpersonal Relationships
In this subject the focus will be on understanding the personalised elements of the educational process and assisting vocational educators to develop the interpersonal skills of others. Vocational educators will apply appropriate theory to develop self awareness of their own interpersonal strategies in the classroom and as educational consultants. Educational strategies will be analysed and practised to enable vocational educators to develop students' skills in relating effectively to others in industry and the workplace. Both oral and written dimensions will be analysed, including development of public speaking, self presentation and helping skills and application of research findings to writing for particular audiences in the workplace such as technical readers and employers.

T1141 Developing Group Processes
In this subject the educational process will be examined from a communication perspective to assist vocational educators to facilitate the learning and performance of groups and teams. In particular, vocational educators will investigate a variety of group process techniques to enhance quality and productivity, increase member satisfaction and motivation, improve performance as a group member, achieve and maintain cohesiveness and interpret communication interactions within the group. Intragroup and intergroup relationships in educational and workplace settings will be investigated. Vocational educators will be required to analyse critically group processes in educational contexts and will develop strategies to improve group/team leadership and participation in others.

T1149 Developing Vocational Systems
In this subject the focus will be on exploring the influence on quality vocational education of a range of dynamic features of human systems in vocational settings such as vocational education providers and industry workplaces. In particular, theoretical approaches in communication relating to the functioning of education and training in organisational contexts will be investigated such as monitoring formal and informal channels, improving organisational documents, briefing and leading teams, managing conflict, negotiating, consulting and using communication media to achieve educational and organisational goals. Vocational educators will develop, apply and evaluate strategic interventions to facilitate learning in vocational settings and they will develop their ability to develop others' skills for planning and implementing appropriate interventions to promote the learning organisation.

T1153 Independent Study Project in Vocational Education
In this subject vocational educators will design and negotiate their own project in consultation with a member of academic staff. The project must relate to an aspect of vocational education relating to the development of communication strategies or skills and must represent an extension of aspects or an aspect not previously dealt with in other subjects in communication development in adult vocational education. Possible areas of study are interpersonal relationships; group processes; vocational education systems; or another approved area which extends understanding of vocational education and the educational process from a communication perspective .